

Health Bulletin

Vaccinations Give Adults A Shot At Good Health

(NAPSA)—Immunization isn't just for kids. That's because a person's need for immunizations does not end when he or she reaches adulthood. Adult vaccinations are just as important for disease prevention but are commonly neglected.

Vaccinations can work in two ways for adults: to boost the immune response to a vaccination received in childhood—for example, a tetanus booster—or to protect an adult from a particular illness, such as the vaccination for pneumonia.

"Vaccinations are critically important for adults, especially in helping to prevent diseases that can be severe in older patients, such as pneumococcal pneumonia, and influenza," said Gary W. Procop, M.D., FCAP, board-certified pathologist from the Cleveland Clinic. A pathologist is a physician who examines cells, bodily fluids, and tissues to diagnose disease.

Vaccinations and Good Health

Adult vaccination needs are determined by age and underlying conditions. Patients with certain chronic illnesses may require adult vaccinations earlier than patients without such conditions. Maintaining an up-to-date status is vital for optimal adult health. The College of American Pathologists recommends patients discuss their vaccination status with their primary care physician.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviews the recommended Adult Immunization Schedule each year to ensure that it reflects the current recommendations for the licensed vaccines and when healthy adults should receive them.

Vaccinations for tetanus, diph-



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theria, acellular pertussis, human papillomavirus (HPV), measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), varicella, influenza and pneumococcal disease are all covered by that review, as are those for hepatitis A and B, meningococcal disease and herpes zoster vaccines.

The committee recommends that all patients over the age of 50 should receive an influenza vaccination each year, and all patients older than 65 years old should receive the pneumococcal vaccine to prevent pneumonia. The varicella vaccine has been recommended for all adults without a history of exposure (i.e., chicken pox), and the herpes zoster vaccine has been recommended for patients older than 60 years.

Pregnancy and immunocompromising conditions, including organ or bone marrow/stem cell transplantation and hereditary or acquired immunodeficiency conditions, are conditions that could increase a person's risk to receiving certain vaccinations. Additional and regularly updated information concerning vaccinations can be found at www.cdc.gov, or visit the College of American Pathologists at www.cap.org.